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ABSTRACT

Drug courts are designed to stop the abuse of alcohol and other drugs and the related criminal activity by offering individuals, whose criminal activity stems from substance abuse, the choice to participate in treatment. In exchange for successful completion of a treatment program, the court has the option of dismissing the original charge, reducing a sentence, or issuing a combination of the two. This paper provides information on national organizations, publications, and the names of community leaders who have expertise in drug courts. Currently there are 361 drug courts in operation with an additional 220 in the planning process. Information in this document can assist communities in undertaking the needed measures to treat and reduce substance abuse. (JDM)

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DRUG COURTS

Technical Assistance Packet

Join Together:
A National Resource for Communities Fighting Substance Abuse and Gun Violence

www.jointogether.org

April 2000

ED 456 364

Description of the Issue

Drug courts are designed to stop the abuse of alcohol and other drugs and related criminal activity by offering individuals whose criminal involvement stems from substance use the choice to participate in treatment. In exchange for successful completion of a treatment program, the court may dismiss the original charge, reduce or set aside a sentence, offer a lesser penalty, or offer a combination of these. A drug court establishes an environment that the participant can understand, in which clear choices are presented and individuals are encouraged to take control of their own recovery. (National Association of Drug Court Professionals). According to the National Drug Court Institute, there are currently 361 drug courts in operation with 140,000 individuals enrolled in a drug court program to date. In addition, there are 220 drug courts in the planning process.

What follows is a list of national organizations, publications, community leaders with an expertise in drug courts, and community stories.

National Organizations

National Drug Court Institute
The mission of the National Drug Court Institute is to promote education, research, and scholarship to the drug court field and other court-based intervention programs. The Institute puts out a semi-annual review to keep practitioners abreast of important new developments in the drug court field. It also publishes a resource guide with an extensive list of drug court publications, as well as a variety of other useful publications.
901 N. Pitt Street, Suite 370, Alexandria, VA 22314; Tel: 888-909-NDCI; Fax: 703-706-0577; www.NDCI.org

Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)
The Bureau provides funding, evaluation, training, technical assistance, and information support to state and community criminal justice programs.
Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, 810 7th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20531; Tel: 202-307-0765; www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA

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Drug Court Clearinghouse & Technical Assistance Project (DCCTAP)
DCCTAP compiles operational and evaluative information on adult, juvenile, and family drug court programs throughout the United States. Publications, resources and technical assistance are available.
American University, Justice Programs Office, 4400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Brandywine, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20016-8159; Tel: 202-885-2875; Fax: 202-885-2885; www.american.edu/justice

The National Association of Drug Court Professionals
The National Association of Drug Court Professionals seeks to reduce substance abuse, crime and recidivism by promoting and advocating for the establishment and funding of Drug Courts and providing for collection and dissemination of information, technical assistance, and mutual support to association members. The Association also provides publications and materials.
901 N. Pitt Street, Suite 370, Alexandria, VA 22314; Tel: 703-706-0576; Fax: 703-706-0577; www.nadcp.org/

Publications and How to Order Them

The publications listed here are both free and of modest cost.

- *Drug Courts: A Revolution in Criminal Justice.*
  This publication discusses the evolution of drug courts from the grassroots level and their impact on the criminal justice system. It looks at the components of drug courts, their link to the communities, and the future of drug courts in the criminal justice system. Available through Drug Strategies by calling 202-289-9070 or visiting their website at www.drugstrategies.org.

- *Drug Courts: An Overview of Operational Characteristics and Implementation Issues.*
  This overview provides a comparative profile of various Drug Court programs and presents a comprehensive description of drug court program activities at the state and local levels. This publication focuses on the operational elements critical to program effectiveness, and the implementation issues that have emerged. Available through the Drug Court Resource Center, a Program of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Dept. of Justice at Tel: 202-885-2875.

National and Community Leaders

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Community Stories

Stories listed below are reprinted from Join Together Online. Similar stories can be found at www.jointogether.org.

First Drug Court Still Provides Valuable Lessons

The mood in Dade County, Fla., in 1989 was not too far off the TV version of Miami Vice: thousands of recent Cuban immigrants gave the region a sense of excitement and possibility, but too much of that "excitement" came in the form of deadly battles between drug gangs. The arrests and convictions that followed in response quickly began to overwhelm the local prison and court system. "It became very clear in the latter part of the 1980s that the drug problem in Dade County had become epidemic, and our efforts to deal with it on the demand side were fragmented," recalled Judge Gerald T. Wetherington, chief judge for the county. Fortunately, said Wetherington, the criminal justice leaders in Dade enjoyed cordial relations with the local treatment system. Plus, local leaders already were meeting monthly to coordinate criminal justice efforts, and out of these meetings came a decision to look at ways that the courts could better integrate treatment into the justice system. The task fell to Judge Herbert Klein, who was given a year off the bench to develop a master plan for dealing with substance abuse.

Klein quickly found that treatment resources in the area were scarce. "Every community's answer to drugs was to hire more police and judges, to build more jails and do more interdiction," he recalled. "Every answer from society's point of view was on the supply side, and it was an abysmal failure." Changing tactics required a fundamental shift in thinking, said Klein: "Treating people as addicts, rather than criminals." From that grew the idea to establish a special court that would direct drug offenders to treatment rather than prison. Local treatment providers were called in to help design the program. "Drug court is all about the belief in the redemption of human beings -- reaching out to people and telling them we care, and that we will help if we can," Klein said.

Wetherington said that Dade County officials realized that judges were in a unique position to influence the behavior of the people who appeared before them. The judge's symbolic power of rejection or acceptance is formidable, he noted. "If we crush you, then you're a bum, but that expression of acceptance makes such an impact," Wetherington said. "This is the key to the success of drug courts." Klein agreed. "The judge is this high authority, and if he or she is saying that you are worthwhile and that the court is not going to allow you to fail, perhaps you'll say 'Maybe I am worthwhile,'" he said.
For more information, contact The Miami Coalition at the North-South Center, 1500 Monza Avenue, Coral Gables, FL 33146-3027; Tel: 305 284-6848; Fax: 305 284-6870; Eml: info@miamicoalition.org.

Drug Courts Must Partner with Community Coalitions
Community-based coalitions can play a critical role as supporter, facilitator and moderator for local drug courts, and having drug courts are an important element in comprehensive community anti-drug strategies, according to experts at the National Association of Drug Court "The involvement of the broad-based community is absolutely essential" to the success of drug courts, according to George Kosnik, who heads justice and law enforcement operations at the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Like other participants, drug courts have found that broad-based community coalitions serve as an effective middleman, said David Choate, director of the Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse. Coalitions can help bridge the gap between the justice system and the treatment community, he noted. "As a coalition representing the community, we don't have a bias in developing the drug court, so we're looked at as an organization that can pull things together," said Choate. "Community coalitions can be very effective in helping you establish and keep drug courts going."

Marilyn Wagner Culp, president of the Miami Coalition for a Safe and Drug-Free Community, said that coalitions also can put drug court officials in contact with valuable allies in the community. These alliances can serve as a catalyst for making the policy, system and funding changes needed for a successful drug court program. "Every community has a group of private-sector leaders who want to work with the public sector," she said. "There are natural leaders in every community and neighborhood. They are not necessarily CEOs, but people who are trusted: those people who are labeled as 'activists,' and are a pain in the side, are exactly who you want."

In Texas, the San Antonio Fighting Back coalition has worked with the criminal justice system to provide ex-offenders with jobs, housing and other support services, said former program executive director Beverly Watts-Davis. "The court couldn't do that; they needed us to do it," she said. "The judges recognized that offenders needed jobs, but the court isn't in the job placement or housing business." In a partnership with the local attorney general's office, Fighting Back established an Americorps program for 296 offenders, who were given service jobs as part of their court-mandated community restitution. The result: 150 participants are now in college, and only about 15 percent have run afoul of the law again, said Watts-Davis.

Involvement in coalitions also gives drug court advocates greater access to important government officials in a non-partisan setting, said Choate. In many cases, local lawmakers rely on coalitions for information about the community, making involvement even more valuable. "We have become known as an organization that knows what's going on, so [government officials] come to us for guidance," Choate said.

The knowledge base of community coalitions can benefit drug courts directly. "The coalition's purpose is to know what's out there and bring it home to you," said Watts-Davis. For example, she said, data gathered by her group helped show the local United Way that the services they were funding were not going to the parts of the city where the greatest need existed. A subsequent shift in funding priorities received credit for contributing to a double-digit drop in San Antonio's crime rate. Similarly, coalitions can provide drug courts with valuable information about individual offenders and community-wide trends.

Besides filling an important gap in the creation of comprehensive community anti-drug strategies, drug courts can have other positive benefits for community groups. In Broward County, for example, Choate's group leveraged its strong ties to the local criminal justice system to win $1.1 million in funding from the federal Byrne Memorial grants program, which flows through local law enforcement agencies and typically is used for criminal justice programs. In Broward, however, "our local law enforcement people said let's use it for treatment, prevention, and education," said Choate. For more information, contact the National Association of Drug Court Professionals at 901 N. Pitt Street, Suite 370, Alexandria, VA 22314; Tel: 703-706-0576; Fax: 703-7060577; www.nadcp.org/.